



Phoenix, AZ  
**Silver Star Medal**

## Captain Ross Pixler

The repetitiveness of an army lieutenant's fifteen-month tour in Iraq was shattered by the horrific force of two IEDs, but his courage never faltered.

On patrol in al Bawi, Iraq, then-First Lieutenant Ross Pixler was in the lead inside his armored Bradley Fighting Vehicle on an October day when the fiery blast of an IED shattered the daily monotony. The deeply buried IED exploded as the Bradley passed over, ripping the vehicle apart and killing three fellow soldiers.

Still dazed by the carnage, Pixler exemplified the strength of an army soldier by ignoring his injuries, finding his rifle, and getting to work. Already the three other vehicles in the convoy were approaching the attack site, but Pixler wasted no time in checking on the unconscious driver and gunner, and taking up a defensive position. He later reflected, "Everything goes really fast and I wasn't really stopping to think about what I was doing. I was doing what I was trained to do."

Just as Pixler and the rest of his unit began recovering from the attack, scattered mortar and small arms fire bombarded the site. Pixler, rattled by his concussion, did not hesitate to raise his rifle and take a key role in the defense of the position while assistance came to recover the bodies of the Americans.

As the hours wore on, Pixler and the other surviving members of his team were loaded onto another Bradley and pulled out of the waning firefight. The safety of the rescue vehicle was broken when another IED crippled it, forcing the men to exit the vehicle and repulse another attack.

It would be many hours from the initial attack to the time Pixler and his men were within the walls of an American base, but during that time his focus on the mission and his men never wavered.

For his bravery under such austere conditions and his tenacity in the face of adversity, he earned the prestigious Silver Star medal. Pixler considers it not an award for himself but, "an award for every single one of the soldiers that were out there, and the ones that can't come home."

